

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 IGA-01 L-02 ABF-01 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8427

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1048

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS KS

SUBJECT: F-5E PRODUCTION AND INTEREST IN YF-16.

SUMMARY: ROKG IS CONTINUING TO EVALUATE ITS FIGHTER AIRCRAFT ALTERNATIVES AND HAS ASKED GENERAL DYNAMICS REPRESENTATIVES FOR COST AND AVAILABILITY DATA ON YF-16. KOREANS ARE ALSO STILL PLANNING FOR F-5E CO-PRODUCTION. END SUMMARY.

1. SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, GEN PAIK, ASSISTANT MINISTER, MND, ADVISED CHIEF, JUSMAG-K, OF SEVERAL VARIATIONS OF THE F-5E CO-PRODUCTION SCHEME BEING CONSIDERED AND OF ROKG'S DESIRE TO CONSIDER CO-PRODUCTION OF THE YF-16 AS A FOLLOW ON. AT THAT TIME CHIEF, JUSMAG-K, ADVISED GEN PAI TO ONLY REQUEST A LETTER OF OFFER ON THE F-5E CO-PRODUCTION SO THAT CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW

REQUIRED COULD BE INITIATED AND WE AND ROKS COULD

BE READY TO START THE PROGRAM IN APRIL EVEN THOUGH TOTAL QUANTITY OF F-5ES TO BE CO-PRODUCED WAS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE PRESIDENT. INsofar AS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CO-PRODUCTION OF THE YF-16'S WAS CONCERNED, CHIEF, JUSMAG-K TOLD PAIK THAT ROKG WOULD PROBABLY BE UNABLE TO BEGIN YF-16 CO-PRODUCTION IN AN EARLY TIME FRAME AND, OF COURSE, COULD NOT PROCEED AT ALL UNLESS

THE US PRODUCER AGREED TO SUCH CO-PRODUCTION. ACCORDINGLY, CHIEF JUSMAG-K, DID NOT SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR CO-PRODUCTION OF THE YF-16'S, ONLY A REQUEST FOR PRICE AND AVAILABILITY FOR PURCHASE OF SAME. MOREOVER, CHIEF, JUSMAG-K, ADVISED MND TO CONTACT THE YF-16 US PRODUCER AND ASCERTAIN POSSIBILITIES OF YF-16 CO-PRODUCTION IN THE LATER YEARS.

2. FOLLOWING ABOVE CONVERSATION WITH PAIK EMBASSY RECEIVED SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT F5E CO-PRODUCTION PROPOSAL WAS BEING FURTHER EVALUATED WITHIN ROKG. IN RESPONSE TO MND REQUEST, IN EARLY FEB NORTHROP REPRESENTATIVES PRESENTED ROKS WITH SEVERAL VARIATIONS TO THEIR ORIGINAL FIVE PHASE CO-PRODUCTION PROPOSAL TOGETHER WITH ALTERNATIVE COST DATA. LOCKHEED'S REPRESENTATIVE IN SEOUL TELLS US THAT MND HAS IN FACT RECEIVED A DIRECTIVE FROM BLUE HOUSE TO LOOK INTO ADVANCED FIGHTER PRODUCTION (YF-16) AND, "THE POSSIBILITIES OF PLACING LESS EMPHASIS ON PLANS TO PURCHASE OR CO-PRODUCE CURRENT AIRCRAFT SUCH AS F5E AND F4E." LATEST INDICATION THAT REEVALUATION NOW GOING ON WAS GIVING TO US FEB 17 WHEN GENERAL DYNAMICS REPRESENTATIVES TOLD EMBASSY THEY HAD BEEN INVITED TO KOREA BY KOREA TACOMA MARINE PRESIDENT YOON EUNG-YUL TO DISCUSS COST AND AVAILABILITY OF YF-16. YOON ARRANGED MEETINGS FOR GENERAL DYNAMICS REPS WITH BLUE HOUSE ECONOMIC SECRETARY OH WON-CHUL AND ALSO MND OFFICIALS AND THEY WERE TOLD THAT QUESTION OF F-5E CO-PRODUCTION STILL OPEN AND THAT ROKG MOST INTERESTED LOOKING INTO ALTERNATE POSSIBILITIES INCLUDING EARLY PURCHASE YF-16 AND EVENTUAL CO-PRODUCTION OF THIS AIRCRAFT. ROK OFFICIALS ALSO SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY OF CO-PRODUCING YF-16S IN CONSORTIUM ARRANGEMENT WITH REPUBLIC OF CHINA. GENERAL DYNAMICS PEOPLE TOLD US THEY PLANNED TO NOTIFY THEIR HEADQUARTERS OF THESE OVERTURES IMMEDIATELY AND WOULD BE RECOMMENDING THAT ALL CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBLE COSTS AND AVAILABILITY INFORMATION BE FURNISHED ROKG AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. IN ORDER TO CLARIFY GENERAL DYNAMICS AND OTHER COMMENTS TO US, CHIEF JUSMAG AGAIN DISCUSSED ISSUE WITH GEN PAIK ON FEB 18, AND WAS INFORMED THAT THE F5E CO-PRODUCTION PROJECT IS STILL PLANNED. HOWEVER, ACCORDING PAIK THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT ACTUALLY TO BE CO-PRODUCED HAS NOT BEEN DETERMINED. PAIK AFFIRMED THAT ROKG WAS CONTACTING GENERAL DYNAMICS TO ASCERTAIN THE FEASIBILITY OF YF-16 CO-PRODUCTION, BUT HE SPECIFICALLY REITERATED THAT THE YF-16 CO-PRODUCTION WAS IN ADDING PAIK THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT

ACTUALLY TO BE CO-PRODUCED HAS NOT BEEN DETERMINED.
PAIK AFFIRMED THAT ROKG WAS CONTACTING GENERAL
DYNAMICS TO ASCERTAIN THE FEASIBILITY OF YF-16
CO-PRODUCTION, BUT HE SPECIFICALLY REITERATED THAT THE
YF-16 CO-PRODUCTION WAS IN ADDITION TO THE F5E
CO-PRODUCTION NOT IN LIEU OF IT.

4. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH ROKS LOOKING
INTO FY-16 POSSIBILITIES; INDEED IT SEEMS TO BE LOGICAL
THING FOR THEM TO DO AND IT APPEARS FROM HERE TO BE IN
OUR INTEREST AS WELL. WHILE THIS FURTHER EVALUATION
OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT ALTERNATIVES RAISES NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT
F-5E CO-PRODUCTION WE WOULD UNDERLINE MGEN PAIK'S REAFFIRMA-
TION TO CHIEF JUSMAG THT ROK STILL PROCEEDING WITH ITS F4E
PLANS. ACCORDINGLY, WE BELIEVE USG EVALUATION OF
THIS PROPOSAL WHICH WE RECOMMENDED IN SEOUL 0781
SHOULD PROCEED APACE.
SNEIDER

CONFIDENTIAL

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